

RECENT GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

ARCTIC EXPLORATION OF THE NORTH EAST PASSAGE.

Although arctic exploration in the direction of the north west passage has been a favorite yet comparatively fruitless enterprise for many years, it was not until last year that a successful exploration of the north east passage to Asia was made. Explorations in this direction had for three centuries proved abortive, so that the first successful one was made by the Swedish ship *Vega*, under the command of the energetic explorer, Prof. Nordenskiold. He completed the memorable voyage during the months of July, August and September of last year—a voyage which Capt. Markham says will always rank as one of the greatest geographical feats of the present century. The commander of the *Vega*, after careful study of currents and the movements of ice in these seas, and two test voyages in 1875 and 1876, at length succeeded in making the famous passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean around the Northern part of Europe. He also succeeded in opening up the Siberian coast and rivers to civilization and commerce. On the 5th of August last Prof. Nordenskiold reached the mouth of the Yenisei river, and on the 19th of the same month the first keel (as Capt. Markham says) made by human hands, cleft the sea round the most northern point of the old world." This was Cape Chelyuskin—the *Promontorium Topin* of Pliny—found to be in North latitude 77° 41'.

Another notable voyage in this direction was made last year by the Dutch schooner *Willem Baren's*—so designated in honor of the Dutch navigator of that name in 1594. This schooner succeeded in reaching the hitherto inaccessible shores of Franz Josef Land, lying three degrees north of Novaya Zemlya (or Nova Zembla). The only other vessel which approached the inhospitable coast was the Austro-Hungarian exploring ship *Tegetthoff*, which drifted there in the ice in 1872-3, in which she was hopelessly beset, and from which she was never extricated, but had to be abandoned by her heroic crew. The geographical importance of this feat of the *Willem Barents* cannot be too highly estimated, as it has disposed of many knotty points in North Eastern Arctic Navigation. It is expected that it will greatly facilitate the scientific exploration of the polar sea and area, and thus solve many doubts and surmises of navigators in arctic waters.

As it may be interesting to our readers to know something of the prospects of exploration in this new field, we shall devote the next geographical paper to this subject.

**SPELLING REFORM.**—Dr. J. A. H. Murray, President of the Philological Society, writing to a member of the English Spelling Reform Association, says:—"As to practical measures, I strongly approve of gradual steps. If spelling reformers will agree on a list of immediate changes, and pledge themselves to use them *whenever they can*, I will join them in doing so. If some hundreds of men will do this, it cannot be laughed down. I would have a list drawn up of words on which there would be a general agreement, excluding for the present *all* doubtful words, but including all those like *hav, giv, catalog, tung, det,*

*dout, coud, soverin, lovd, prest, decht*, whose superfluous letters are both *unphonetic* and *unhistoric*, in order to make a beginning, and in fact to make the matter a practical one, so that people would be forced to say, 'Some people spell this word so and so: I think theirs is a better way.'

—We copy the following statistics relating to the schools of England and Wales from the *Schoolmaster*:

The grants for day schools amounted to £1,999,929 5s. 8d., an increase on the previous year of £188,281 15s. 4d.; for evening schools, £22,540 13s. 1d., a decrease of £1,585 6s. 11d.; payment of Honours' fees, £7,521 19s. 11d., an increase of £4,888 7s.; grants to School Boards, £1,070 10s. 8d., an increase of £258 0s. 4d.; grants towards building and furnishing school premises, £8,059 14s., a decrease of £986 16s. 8d.; grants to training colleges, £105,441 0s. 11d., an increase of £1,900 2s. 10d.; pensions to teachers, £4,786 14s. 3d., an increase of £2,117 18s. 7d.; administration, £179,408 13s. 6d., an increase of £6,989 3s. 2d.; organisation of districts, etc., £800 13s. 10d., a decrease of £204 0s. 8d. The total is £2,828,998 5s. 4d., and the increase as compared with the previous year £151,568 18s. 10d. Classified according to denomination of the recipients, the following is the result:—Schools connected with the Church of England, £1,178,281 17s. 9d., an increase of £44,866 18s. 6d.; British, undenominational, and other schools, £208,891 10s., an increase of £6,025 1s. 4d.; Wesleyan schools, £106,086 1s. 10d., an increase of £4,402 7s. 4d.; Roman Catholic schools, £112,276 8s. 8d., an increase of £2,780 18s. 11d.; Board schools, £588,067 14s. 2d., an increase of £86,500 19s. 6d. The number of certificated teachers actually engaged in teaching was 80,128; assistant teachers employed under Article 79 of the Code, 6,615; assistant mistresses, 2,124; pupil teachers under apprenticeship, 80,478. The salaries of 124 masters principally in Church schools were under £50 per year, and 187, of whom 49 were Board, and the rest Voluntary, received over £800. The number of schools inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors was 17,166, in which accommodation was provided for 4,142,224. The number on the registers was 8,710,888, of whom 8,122,672 were present on the day of inspection. The average attendance was 2,594,995. The total expenditure of schools for the complete year was £4,778,824. The expenditure per scholar in average attendance in schools connected with the National Society or the Church of England was £1 14s. 7½d.; in Wesleyan schools, £1 14s. 5½d. per head; and in School Board schools, £2 2s. 0½d. per head, or an average on all schools of £1 16s. 5d. The amount received from school pence was no less than £1,849,297 paid by scholars and £28,066 paid by guardians. Of 1,760,040 scholars presented for examination in Standards 1 to 6 inclusive, 968,881 were in schools connected with the National Society and the Church of England, and 446,810 in Board schools. The percentages of passes in reading were—in National schools, 87·08; in Wesleyan, 88·1; in Roman Catholic, 89·74; in British, 88·56; and in Board, 87·66. In writing the percentages were for the same—78·81, 80·72, 81·86, 80·83, and 82·18; and in arithmetic—71·98, 75·60, 78·76, 75·7, and 77·4.

—The following information relative to teachers' salaries in Scotland will prove interesting. It will be necessary to remember that most masters have residences as well:

	Rate of Grant.	Rate of Expenditure	Average salary—	
			Masters.	Mistresses.
Public Schools.....	£0 17 1½	£2 8 6½	£187 17 1	£70 5 1
Church of Scotland do.....	0 17 7½	2 1 11½	164 17 1	84 14 0
Free Church do.....	0 16 1	2 1 1½	141 0 11	77 18 7
Episcopal Church do.....	0 14 9½	1 13 8	127 12 11	70 4 4
Roman Catholic do.....	0 15 0½	1 11 11½	183 18 8	78 11 4
Other do.....	0 16 11½	2 1 2½	144 6 4	75 4 10
<b>Net Average.....</b>	<b>£0 16 11</b>	<b>£2 2 1½</b>	<b>£139 3 0</b>	<b>£72 6 4</b>

—It is understood that the Hon. Adam Crooks, Minister of Education, has left for England to secure a Professor for the